

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A process for introducing solutes into dried fruit for the production of soft dried fruit which comprises:
 - (a) providing dried fruit of a moisture content between 5 to 40% or more;
 - (b) disrupting the structure of the fruit by a mechanical or physical process producing cracks on the surface and/or edges of the fruit whilst maintaining integrity thereof;
 - (c) reacting the fruit with a solute solution containing one or more water activity controlling solutes for a time sufficient to allow solute ~~infusion~~ absorption into the fruit, optionally removing, if necessary, any remnant ~~infusion-liquid~~ solute solution and thereafter drying the fruit to a desired moisture content and water activity, and optionally,
 - (d) treating the surface of the fruit with one or more sugars.

2. (Currently amended) A process for introducing solutes into dried fruit for the production of soft dried fruit which comprises:
 - (a) providing dried fruit of a moisture content between 5% to 40% or more;
 - (b) subjecting the dried fruit to a mechanical or physical process which causes cracks in the surface and/or edges of the fruit
 - (c) whilst maintaining the essential structure and appearance of the fruit;
 - (d) mixing the fruit with a solute solution containing one or more water activity controlling solutes for a time ~~sufficient~~ sufficient to allow complete ~~infusion~~ absorption of solute into the fruit;

- (e) removing, if necessary, any remnant ~~infusion liquid~~ solute solution and thereafter drying the fruit product to a desired moisture content and water activity; and optionally,
 - (f) treating the surface of the fruit with one or more sugars.
3. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 2 wherein step (b) is provided by passing the fruit through a roller mill, by explosion puffing or toasting.
 4. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 3 wherein the fruit is rolled such that the uptake of solute is between about 1.3 to about 1.9 fold greater than that of unrolled fruit.
 5. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 4 wherein the fruit is a fruit piece having dimensions from about 2x2x2 mm to about 60x30x10 mm.
 6. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 4 wherein the fruit is an apple piece which is rolled through a roller mill having a roller gap width from 5% to 20% of the average apple piece width.
 7. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit is a pear piece which is rolled through a roller of roller gap width equal to 35% to 45% of the piece width.
 8. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit is a raisin which is rolled through a roller of roller gap width equal to 35% to 45% of the raisin width.

9. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 2 wherein a water activity-controlled fruit product is produced within about thirty minutes to about four hours.
10. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein step (b) is provided by passing the fruit through a roller mill, by explosion puffing or toasting.
11. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 3 wherein the fruit is a fruit piece having dimensions from about 2x2x2 mm to about 60x30x10 mm.
12. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 2 wherein the fruit is a fruit piece having dimensions from about 2x2x2 mm to about 60x30x10 mm.
13. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit is a fruit piece having dimensions from about 2x2x2 mm to about 60x30x10 mm.
14. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 3 wherein the fruit is an apple piece which is rolled through a roller mill having a roller gap width from 5% to 20% of the average apple piece width.
15. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 2 wherein the fruit is an apple piece which is rolled through a roller mill having a roller gap width from 5% to 20% of the average apple piece width.

16. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit is an apple piece which is rolled through a roller mill having a roller gap width from 5% to 20% of the average apple piece width.
17. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein a water activity-controlled fruit product is produced within about thirty minutes to about four hours.
18. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fruit has a water activity (A_w) between 0.2 and 0.65.
19. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 2 wherein the fruit has a water activity (A_w) between 0.2 and 0.65.